

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSONS.

November 25. Mark III: 22-35.

A very common error among religious people is to attribute everything that appears to be unfamiliar or outside their own experience to the agency of the devil. It was the devil who was said to have planted Buddhism in Tibet to confound the faithful by its identity with Christian forms; it was the devil who inspired Joan of Arc in her prophecies and patriot mission; it is the devil who, according to Mr. Pember, founded the Theosophical movement; and it was a devil, thought the scribes of Jerusalem, which enabled Jesus to cast forth demons. The gods of other nations were always devils to the Jews, and indeed to the modern Christians, and so Set, Seth, or Satan, god of the Hittites, the same as Beelzebub, and Apollo, the Sun god of the Greeks, and Michael, the Archangel of the Sun of the modern church though all the same, are rarely so considered. Satan is a title applied to God and his angels, but usually then translated adversary. See 1 Chron. xxi: 1, and 2 Sam. xxiv: 1. Also compare Zech. iii: 2, with Jude, verse 9, where the Lord and Michael are identified. Jesus might well warn his hearers not to blaspheme, or bring a railing accusation, as translated in Jude, against the Holy Ghost. We more frequently reject than entertain angels unawares. There is a strong indication of what the sin against the Holy Ghost is, which modern scoffers might well study in iii: 30. The relations of the Yogi or ascetic to the world are well exemplified in the latter part of the lesson.

December 2. Luke vii., 34-35.

The connection of Jesus with his cousin John is not clearly explained in the gospels, but we learn from other sources that John was initiated into the mysteries of the Essenes, that he taught their doctrine, and baptised with their baptism. The ceremony is indeed spoken of as the baptism of John, and Jesus submitted to it as a disciple of the mystical brotherhood. As Buddha had done before, he speaks of a still greater system than the Essenian, probably then degenerated into the practice of the Hatha yoga. Those who are lesser among Rajah yogis are greater than the greatest of the others. To the world at large both schools are alike for whether it is piped to or mourned with the world attends not: the ascetic has a devil, and the Messenger is a wine bib-

ber and a glutton. But wisdom (Sophia) is justified by all her children. This word "justified," is the same used continually in the connection of being justified by faith or by works, or being made righteous, as Rev. xxii. 11; or as in verse 29 of the lesson. The descendants of John's disciples still exist in Palestine.

December 9. Luke viii: 4-5.

Only to the initiated is it given to know the mysteries. It is the fashion nowadays to deny the existence of the mysteries, and the exoteric interpretation of the parables is accepted as the last word of knowledge. Jesus never spoke to the uninitiated of the mysteries other than in parables, see for instance Mark iii: 23, where we are now told to interpret literally. There is an excellent moral for all in the parable of the sower, but for one who has been at any pains to analyze his nature, the astral, the kamic, and the lower manasic natures are well figured in the wayside, the rock and the thorns. In the career of the occult life the four stages are also well marked.

December 16. Matthew x., 5-16.

A typical commission for all messengers is recorded. "Preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons (elementals). Freely ye have received, freely give." One is frequently told that it costs so much to go through college to be an ordained minister that one is entitled to a stipend for the exhibition of one's acquirements, and truly one gets one's money's worth. Jesus tells us that the workman is worthy of his food, and Paul that the laborer is worthy of double honor, but either our modern social conditions are wrong or these ideas are inconsiderate. But let the true disciple obey the command. Be wise also as serpents, emblem of the Masters or Seers, and harmless as doves, emblem of the novice or probationary chela, untaught yet in occult arts. They who will not hearken, must endure their karma.

"The Theosophic Gleaner," all the way from Bombay, India, has a quaint air due to little solecisms pardonable enough in a foreigner, as, for instance, "A Criticism Replied," (Answered). But the earnest thought and spiritual aspiration that might be expected is evident on every page.